3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

INHERITANCE

The sons inherit the property of their father. The wives of the deceased father are divided among the children, who may, and in most cases do, marry them, except their own mother. It is said that sometimes, when a husband is very old and infirm, his wives put him to death, in order to get a younger companion. On inheritance vide page 113.

DANCING AND WAR-PLAYS

Their chief amusement is dancing. The houses of a village are built in a circle, leaving an open place in their midst. Here the inhabitants assemble in the evening, stretching themselves in the warm ashes or on a skin, or squatting on a piece of ambach; several small fires of cow dung are burning and spread a smoke of strong smell, which is the best protection from mosquito-stings. The events of the day are discussed here, the tobacco pipe and merisa pot going from hand to hand. In the middle of this open place the trunk of a large tree is erected, in which the drums are suspended. With them signals are given in times of danger, but more frequently they are used to accompany the dances of the young people. These public dances are among the greatest events in the lives of the young Shilluks; even old men and women, though not taking an active part, are highly interested in them; sitting before the huts in front of the dancers they constitute a chorus, who accompanies the transactions of the younger generation with loud acclamations or blamings. The dances generally take place during the dry season; they begin at about four o'clock in the afternoon, or, in case there is moonshine, later in the evening, and last from three to five hours or longer. As a rule one village invites its neighbours by a drum signal given in the early morning of the day fixed for a dance. On hearing this signal the young people show a great zeal in preparing their body, hairdress and the ornaments worn on the occasion. They go to the village in groups or single, men and girls separately. Usually the youths perform some war-dance in full arms at first, in which the girls do not partake; they form a large circle in four or two rows, and while the drum is being beaten, begin dancing and singing war songs. The dance consists in jumping on the toe and at the same time moving slowly forward. These rhythmical movements are from time to time interrupted by a group of dancers violently rushing out of the circle, howling and shouting aloud, brandishing their spears with fierce looks, and performing mock fights or playing pantomimes, in which they exhibit very remarkable ability. Scenes from the hunting, pastoral and agricultural life are represented with such a dramatic vivacity that they richly deserve the applause they earn.

On a given signal, spears, clubs and shields are laid aside and put together in one place, and now the second part, in which the girls partake, begins. The latter have till then been waiting in a separate place, where the female lookers-on are gathered. Each girl selects her own dancer. First the men form again a

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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The assembly had by then formed up in better order, which they retained until the *reth* stopped for refreshment. Thereafter the high grass at the side of the narrow track precluded the original formation, and Kwa Ojul went ahead, followed by Kwa Okelo, and the *reth* and the main body of the people behind. 643

On reaching the outskirts of Akwabai about half a mile from Debalo, the first messenger of the *reth* ran ahead to bear news to Nyikang of the *reth's* approach. The *reth's* messengers are said to be Kwa Otwot, and it would follow that they are members of one clan In fact they are chosen from many clans (Note 11). [614 202]

Shortly after the despatch of the first messenger, the *reth* retired to the Arab merchant's shop for rest and refreshment, and the crowds squatted down on the grass ahead. After an interval of ten minutes, the *reth* came out again, and, walking fast, took up his position with the Ororo and Kwareth once more, and the procession moved off again in the direction of Fashoda. By this time the party had reached Khor Arepejur and spread out in a long line several ranks deep and parallel to the watercourse. The crowd was obviously larger than at Debalo, for people had been joining in en route, and late-comers had caught up. Others broke away and ran off to nearby villages, where they left their spears and collected millet stalks for the struggle with Nyikang which was to follow.

The Crossing of the Watercourse.

On the opposite side of the watercourse Jago Thabo, the titular chief of Gol Dhiang, with a small party of warriors had arrived to hand over the black bull, over which the *reth* must step before crossing Arepejur, and bearing with them a fish spear wrapped round with a grass mat, another of the many sacred spears of Nyikang. On the other side also were two members of the Kwa Mal carrying a chicken with which they swept the path of the *reth* after he had crossed over.

Just before the *reth* and his followers reached the watercourse a "dust-devil" was seen whirling down towards Fashoda and this was [773 787 821]

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 their return journey to Akurwa some weeks later. The *reth* himself remained up on the mound, while the crowds dispersed to their homes or sat about drinking and chatting round the houses of Fashoda.

(W.P.G.T.)

The final ceremonies on 15th. March consisted of a general assembly of all important chiefs and elders from all over the Shilluk country. Speeches were made, mostly of exhortation. The *reth* was confirmed [693] as supreme judge of the Shilluk people; and finally he was ceremonially shown round Fashoda by the chief of the Kwa Nyikang stopping at each house in turn.

The scene was laid in the open space south of Aturwic, and all [203] the chiefs had been summoned by drum in the early morning. At [778] the bottom of the mound we noticed the *kwom* (sacred stool), draped in white cloth as before; two spears, one wrapped in cloth, were held by bearers, one on each side of the *kwom*, and a small kettle-drum shaped like a basin, the property of the Kwa Wung who live mostly round Detwok, was set on the ground close by with its drummer. The lancebearers and the drummer were all from Kwa Wung.

Facing this stage were the assembled chiefs and elders of the Shilluk, with no conspicuous absentees, each one sitting down holding a spear. There was a clear space of some ten yards between the *kwom* and the chiefs.

In front of the entrance to the huts on Aturwic there was a sheep held tethered. Shortly the *reth* emerged from the huts followed by a group of women, wives and sisters: he and his important entourage were dressed in white with Mrs. Gray skins over the garments.

After stepping over the tethered sheep, the *reth* was led down [644] the slope by the chief of the Kwa Nyikang. His retainers followed him, and most of them stepped over the sheep too; when he reached [293] the bottom of the slope he was lifted on to the sacred stool, and sat facing the chiefs with his retainers grouped behind him: immediately

27: Munro U-5 (1918) 1918 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

and also the official residence of the Ret [1]. About 11 a.m. loud drumming in the distance gave us the first intimation that Nyakang was en route from its shrine in Nyagir and was now approaching Fashoda. In the distance on the slight slope north of Fashoda a large company could be seen with Nyakang and Dak [2] borne aloft in the centre. Hundreds of Shilluk warriors were in attendance on Nyakang and its people. The men of Golbaing and Nyagir were acting as flank guards, and the whole array with the sun on its spears was most impressive. Once and again according to correct tradition Nyakang turned back and retraced its way to very near its starting point in Nyagir. This I understood to be indicative of Nyakang's uncertainty as to whether it would accept the new Ret and bestow on him its divine protection. The pauses and returns of the concourse became more frequent, but shorter in time and during them the warriors and maidens could be seen dancing. About this time a small band of four warriors sent by Fafiti appeared in Fashoda and proceeded to circle round it two or three times with the peculiar dancing stride of the Shilluks. This band was shortly increased to six in number, and finally took its stand on Nyakang's road. The blowing of a horn announced the appearance of the Ret's army from Akwom, a great crowd of warriors. They came on apace until near the small khor about a quarter of a mile south of Fashoda — they were chiefly from the Southern sections, although Kodok itself immediately surrounded the Ret. It was impossible to see Fafiti himself as yet owing to the crowd.

The small party of six above mentioned now plays its part as a post between the Ret and Nyakang. The messengers all ran at full speed and appeared to be changed at the half way post. They are taking offers from the Ret to Nyakang. At first Nyakang refuses them, and turns back. Eventually

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[1] His house consists of four fine built huts enclosed in a fence. The western hut is known as Du-Kot', and in it are kept the sacred stool, the spear, the sword and the shield. The Eastern hut is for the Ret's wives, and the other two are used for any thing the Ret likes. The stool etc. are brought out for the ceremony and redeposited in Du-Kot' afterwards.

[2] Dak is the son of Nyakang: his effigy is much taller and thinner in body, but smaller in head than that of Nyakang. Both effigies are in charge of Ador son of Akol Adong of Akurwa.

27: Munro U-5 (1918) 1918 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

he accepts, and we are informed that one cow, one bull and five spears have been offered and taken. Further I was told that the messengers carry straws symbolical of the above offers (the common practice of Shilluk accounting), but this I cannot vouch for, as we could not see it. When the amount has been fixed, Nyakang appeared to advance steadily and rapidly, only making one sharp rectangular turn in our direction, and as I understood that Nyakang's people could hold to ransom (in cows) any one whom they caught, I made a slight alteration in my position.

At this moment from the side some seventy or eighty of the Ret's wives came dancing towards Nyakang's army holding their hands out palm upwards and chanting *ya bia, ya bia* «come come».

The Ret's army now moves rapidly forward to the khor. I saw in front a small black bull, across which the Ret is said to step before crossing the khor. Tradition states it is important for the new Ret to cross this khor dryshod. As there was still water there, Fafiti was taken across in his toror (Shilluk boat), but owing to the crowd I could not see this. Just as the army gets to the khor, there is a sudden headlong flight by every one, due to the right possessed by the Kwa Mal of flogging any one that tarries or delays crossing the khor with the Ret. The Kwa Mal apparently used their whips with good effect, and soon the whole army was across. For this service Fafiti gives the black bull to the Kwa Mal.

I could not distinguish Fafiti, who in accordance with custom was dressed in the ordinary Shilluk lau (cloth) and with a dingy red and yellow turban on his head. He was holding by his hand a tiny girl brought by the Kwa Okel[1]. In front of him came the people of Kwa Okel dragging forward a white bull tail first. The two armies then meet. Nyakang and

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[1] Kwa Okel. Founded by people that Nyakang found in the Shilluk country. They help in building the house of Nyakang when a king is crowned. They give one of their daughters to the king. The girl is known as Nya Kwer (*i. e.* a girl of the authorities, girl of taxes).

They are sometimes identified with Kwa Kelo — a section founded by Okelo a servant of Nyakang who taught the Shilluks how to prepare the mud for the Tuki (hearth stones). Another tradition states that Okelo was a Nuba, whose sister was married by Nyakang (cf. Westermann, p. 129 et seq., lists of clans made out by Rev. D. Oyler, of Doleib Hill).